



Liechtenstein

International Religious Freedom Report 2005

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Roman Catholic Church is the official state church.

There was no change in the status of respect for religious freedom during the period covered by this report, and government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 61.7 square miles (160 square kilometers) and as of 2002, a total population of 33,863, according to the Office of the National Economy. Membership of the different religious communities is as follows: 25,730 Roman Catholics, 2,354 Protestants, 1,384 Muslims, 258 Eastern Orthodox, 72 Buddhists, 31 Jehovah's Witnesses, 18 Jews, 14 Baha'is, 13 Anglicans, 9 New Apostolics, 8 other religions, and 329 with no formal affiliation to any religious community. For 3,643 residents authorities had no indication as to their religious affiliation. The Government discontinued statistics on religious affiliation for reason of data protection. The data as of the end of 2002 were the last statistics to be collected.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups in the country.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The Government at all levels strives to protect this right in full, and does not tolerate its abuse, either by governmental or private actors. The Criminal Code prohibits any form of discrimination or debasement of any religion or any of its adherents. The Constitution makes the Roman Catholic Church the established church of the country and as such it enjoys the full protection of the State.

Church funding comes from the general budget, as decided by Parliament, and is not a direct "tithe" paid by the citizens. The Government gives money not only to the Roman Catholic Church but also to other denominations. The Roman Catholic and Protestant churches receive regular annual contributions from the government in proportion to membership size; smaller religious groups are eligible to apply for grants for associations of foreigners or specific projects. The Roman Catholic and Protestant churches' finances are integrated directly into the budgets of the national and local governments. The Roman Catholic Church receives approximately \$220,000 (300,000 Swiss francs) per year, plus additional sums from the 11 communes. The relationship between the State and the Roman Catholic Church is being redefined. In 2003, the Government re-established a working group that discussed legislative reform leading to the official recognition of religious communities other than the Roman Catholic Church. In May 2004, the Government also contracted an independent study on church financing reform that is being discussed with local governments. All religious groups enjoy tax-exempt status.

The Archdiocese of Vaduz is scheduled to receive a lump sum of \$2.2 million (3 million Swiss francs) over a total of 5 years as part of a financial settlement with the Diocese of Chur (Switzerland), to which it belonged until 1997. The transaction will permit the financial separation of the dioceses from one another. The first down payment of \$740,000 (1 million Swiss francs) was transferred in December 2003. Additional payments are now being made in installments of \$300,000 (400,000 Swiss francs). The Archdiocese of Vaduz will use the funds to pay back its property loan.

In July 2004, the UNHRC expressed concern about the unequal treatment of different religious denominations in the allocation of public funds and urged the Government to review its policies to ensure an equitable distribution of these funds.

There are no significant foreign missionary groups in the country. To receive a religious-worker visa, an applicant must demonstrate that the host organization is important for the entire country. An applicant must have completed theological studies and be accredited with an acknowledged religious group. Visa requests normally are not denied and are processed in the same manner as requests from other individuals or workers.

Since 2001, the Government grants the Muslim community a residency permit for one Imam, plus one short-term residency permit for an additional Imam during Ramadan. The Government follows a policy of routinely granting visas to the Imams in exchange for the assertion of both the Turkish Association and the Islamic community to prevent religious diatribes by the Imams or the spread of religious extremism.

Confessional religious education at public schools has recently been subject to reform. At the secondary school level, parents of pupils are called upon to decide between traditional confessional religious education (provided by the Roman Catholic Church or the Protestant community) and non-confessional classes on "Religion and Culture." Regarding Roman Catholic confessional education at primary schools, a working group representing the local municipalities, religious teachers (catechists), and the Department of Education has worked out an agreement with the Archbishop of Vaduz. The agreement retained the compulsory nature of confessional religious education and granted the Roman Catholic Church autonomy in setting the curriculum. With regard to oversight of religious education, the agreement gave the Archbishop the final say on employment decisions of religious teachers, including dismissals, and provided for only a complementary supervisory role of the local municipalities. After the working group submitted the agreement to public consultation, all but three municipalities signed on to it and were involved with its implementation. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Protestants were the only other religious community allowed to offer religious education in primary schools. Members of other religious groups were not required to attend these classes. Groups other than the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestants were free to regulate their own religious education.

The Government collaborates with religious institutions by supporting interfaith dialogue and providing adult education courses in religion, as well as other subjects.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policy continued to contribute to the generally free practice of religion.

There were no reports of religious prisoners or detainees.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Abuses by Terrorist Organizations

There were no reported abuses targeted at specific religions by terrorist organizations during the period covered by this report.

Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government has established a working group for the better integration of members of the Muslim community into Liechtenstein society. The working group consists of representatives of the Muslim community and government officials who deal with Islam as part of their duties. The working group's objectives are to counter mutual prejudices and promote respect and tolerance on the basis of dialogue and mutual understanding. In cooperation with the national library, the working group has made accessible to the public a selection of books in Turkish as well as books on Islam.

The Government has supported or sponsored a variety of activities to promote the integration of immigrants and inter-cultural understanding, including a class on inter-cultural dialogue in the curriculum of the national administration's internal training program.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

The generally amicable relationship among religions in society contributed to religious freedom. Roman Catholics, Protestants, and members of other faiths work well together on an ecumenical basis. Differences among religious faiths are not a significant source of tension in society. There have been no reports of verbal or physical acts against Jewish persons or property. The Jewish community in Liechtenstein is too small to sustain an organizational structure of its own.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. The Embassy and the Foreign Office conduct annual discussions of religious freedom issues in preparation for this report.

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[International Religious Freedom Report Home Page](#)